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SUBJECT: ANTI-TIP IN GREECE: NGO & GOG ASSESSMENT OF  
PROGRESS

SUMMARY  
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¶1. (U) In a series of meetings February 9-13 with visiting Cyprus/Greece/Turkey Desk Officer and Embassy PolOff, MFA officials repeatedly underscored their appreciation for U.S. cooperation in the battle against the "deplorable crime" of trafficking in persons (TIP). Officials stressed Greece's political will to combat trafficking, stating that Greece should move to Tier 1 in the USG TIP report, as they "believe that Greece fulfills the minimum standards for the eradication of trafficking, especially in prevention." However, they acknowledged that areas for improvement remained, including the need to: gather and share more reliable statistics; educate prosecutors, police and especially judges; and work more closely with NGOs to identify victims. NGOs were perplexed about the persistently low number of victims identified in Greece. Also, although most noted an improvement in their relationship with the GoG, they felt the GoG should take them more seriously as partners in combating TIP. Funding was a contentious issue, partly because NGOs were unfamiliar with the GoG process requirements. The GoG pointed out that they were half-way toward resolving that issue. End Summary

¶2. (U) In a February 9 - 13 visit to Athens, Elise Mellinger, Cyprus Desk Officer/G issues coordinator for Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey and Embassy PolOff met with NGOs and MFA officials to discuss the state of GoG efforts to combat trafficking in persons in Greece. In meetings with GoG officials that included representatives of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Public Order, Health, and Justice, officials repeatedly thanked the U.S. for its on-going efforts to assist and cooperate with Greece in eradicating what MFA desk officer for the U.S. Greg Vasilostandakis termed "this deplorable crime." They noted that cooperation will continue to expand, as Hellenic Aid and USAID will soon sign a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC). They highlighted Greece's efforts over the past year, citing their expanding regional cooperation, involvement with NGOs, strong political will, an increased number of shelters, training of Greek consular officials in source countries, large projects to raise awareness of prosecutors on identification and increased coordination between parts of the GoG on TIP. They also noted that they were training police in intensive Russian and Albanian courses, and that 16 anti-TIP police units were operational country-wide. IOM continues to work with the GoG on developing a main players' network for regional cooperation with NGOs and consulates in source countries, and recently completed training for 200 out of 400 total prosecutors, which yielded immediate results in the form of prosecutors calling for assistance in identifying victims.

## AREAS FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT

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13. (U) USG representatives likewise thanked those present for their efforts, which saw Greece move off of the Tier Two Watch List in the last year, and also highlighted key areas for improvement, including the need for the GoG to do more to collect and disseminate reliable statistics as an aid to moving Greece onto Tier One, its stated goal. PolOff also stressed the need to share officially and consistently details of positive developments such as the breaking up of trafficking rings or arrests in notorious cases. Mellinger emphasized that a continued area of concern was the fact that traffickers appeared to be serving little or no time in jail.

Lt. Col. Antonia Andreakou of the Hellenic Police Anti-Trafficking Unit explained that this was largely due to the lengthy appeals process, permitting convicted defendants a completely new second trial after a conviction and the right to remain on bail during such an appeal. Andreakou stated that in all of Greece there was currently only one person serving a final jail sentence as a result of a trafficking conviction. All agreed that the best remedy to this situation was much-needed training for judges and prosecutors, emphasizing the possibility of revoking bail for convicted traffickers due to the likelihood of flight in the face of a lengthy prison sentence.

14. (U) The inability of the judiciary to properly deal with trafficking cases was a recurrent theme. A clinical psychologist at a shelter operated by the NGO Klimaka told us of a recent case where the court refused to permit her to testify as an expert witness about trafficking and, thereafter, about the same court making disparaging comments about the victim's behavior. ("Why didn't she just run away?" "Why didn't she use her cell phone to call the

police?") The psychologist explained that such a line of questioning makes plain the need for expert testimony so courts could begin to understand the effects of trauma on victims and why there will frequently be recurring patterns of behavior. Another staff member at Klimaka discussed the fact that courts may sentence traffickers to time in prison after a conviction, but complained that they then frequently released them on bail while the case was on appeal.

GREEK NGOS: "WE'RE NOT ELEPHANTS, (WE'RE MICE)"

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15. (U) Another recurrent theme was the relationship between the GoG and NGOs involved in trafficking issues. Citing the common Greek expression about a mouse who everyone else thinks is an elephant and can't persuade others that it really is a mouse, NGO reps said that they were always made to prove their legitimacy, to prove that "we are not elephants." While most NGO representatives said that the relationship was largely good and saw an improvement over previous years, there were still striking issues in need of resolution. Several NGOs complained that they continued to wait for funding to come through that had been promised in 2004 and others for as much as half of that promised in 2005 and 2006. The GoG releases half of their promised funds for all projects when they are initiated, then asks for receipts in order to disburse the remainder of the funds. Some NGOs were unfamiliar with this process and thus faced bureaucratic hurdles which impeded the funding flow. Unapproved changes by NGOs to their budgets after receiving GoG approval for specific items and projects also caused difficulties. The MFA YDAS (Greek USAID equivalent) representative explained that final payments for 2005 were about to be released, and that NGOs now understand and comply more fully with GoG funding procedures. NGOs pointed out that the Greek Orthodox Church is the largest beneficiary of GoG aid. One million Euros went to the shelter operated by the Church, while only 40,000 Euros went to all other NGOs combined. They noted wryly that the Church's shelter only helped a single "one-million-Euro" victim in 2006.

16. (U) Another complaint voiced by NGO representatives was

their constant need to prove to the GoG that they were reliable and valuable partners in the process. Despite the MOC signed by the GoG, IOM and 12 NGOs in November 2005, some complained of only begrudging acceptance of the need for NGOs to be involved in the issue. This became most problematic when NGOs were denied access to detention centers warehousing women on charges of illegal migration - at least some of whom were likely to be victims of trafficking. However, NGOs acknowledged that being signatories to the MOC conferred upon them some legitimacy and recognition when dealing with police and other officials, and that the GoG was willing to add more NGOs to the MOC. The GoG is currently in the process of adding to the MOC "Nea Zoi" (New Life), a street-based grassroots organization officially organized only after the MOC was signed.

¶17. (U) Several NGOs noted that cooperation with the police had improved significantly with Mr. Vanikiotis in charge of the Athens Organized Crime Unit. One declared that cooperation is so good that Vanikiotis often calls them at night to pick up victims and house them or take them to shelters. However, Nea Zoi, which identified a trafficking victim in a detention center (see below on access) was frustrated at the slow movement of her case despite their repeated visits and requests to the police for her release.

#### DETENTION CENTER CONDITIONS BLEAK BUT STAFF COOPERATIVE

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¶18. (U) In a visit to the Detention Center at Petrou Ralli in Athens, Poloffs were permitted to enter the holding area for both men and women. While clean and sufficiently warm, the Spartan environs (5 cement blocks for beds are the sole furnishings in each toiletless cell with walls decorated only with detainees' drawings and magazine ads) and the complete dearth of any activity underscored why the Council for Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights said in 2006 that the facility was not suited to holding persons for more than a maximum of two days. Nonetheless, Poloffs met detainees who had been incarcerated for several months. (Under Greek law, if a detainee is not deported within three months, he or she is released and told to depart the country on his or her own.

Few do.) Many of the women stated that they did not know when they would be released. A majority were from Georgia, which Greek officials claimed had a poor record of cooperation in trying to identify its citizens for repatriation; others were from Albania, Russia, China, and

Moldova. Albanians were usually quickly released and repatriated due to close cooperation with Albania.

¶19. (U) Most NGOs said that Greece had made clear progress in its efforts to combat TIP in the last 12 months. But even those citing progress wondered how it was possible that in a country with so many TIP victims (allegedly more than 10,000), the shelters are often nearly empty and such a small number of persons were identified as victims under the anti-trafficking law.

¶10. (U) A final NGO complaint was limited ability to gain access to the detention centers in Greece to speak with female trafficking victims; but upon requesting access at the MFA meeting, the Athens detention center director met with PolOff and Mellinger and quickly agreed to provide a tour. He and staff answered questions freely and allowed discussions with the detainees. The detention center director admitted that there was no formal procedure for recognizing which NGOs should be given access to women and which shouldn't. "We're a small country," he offered, "and we can learn from our colleagues who are serious people and who are doing good work, and then we let them in." The MFA said that an "annex" to the 2006 MOC was anticipated in the next few months and that it would list all signing-NGOs to put an end to uneven access. PolOffs did discover that one NGO, "Med-in", visits the center weekly, providing medical attention and advice to detainees. PolOff has scheduled a follow up visit with this NGO.

## PROGRESS ON NIGERIAN VICTIMS' CASE

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¶11. (U) In a meeting with NGO leaders, PolOff and Mellinger heard that the case of two Nigerian women whom Mellinger met in a shelter the previous year was resolved. The visit last year revealed a then nascent trend of Nigerian victims who were physically free but coerced through threats of violence into sending money to traffickers. In this well documented case, one of the victims, who fled to an island and sold items on the street to repay her "debt" to her trafficker from a distance, kept bank receipts of her payments. One of the traffickers subsequently received a jail sentence of 19 years. The other was not convicted due to lack of evidence. Both victims are currently on humanitarian visas. This case illustrates both the progress and the problems in areas of protection and prosecution. The victims were granted reflection periods, referred to NGO shelters and at least one of their traffickers received a severe sentence. The final resolution of the case, however, remains to be seen pending appeals.

### COMMENT

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¶12. (SBU) The GoG has made positive steps in the last year in realizing its National Action Plan and several other anti-TIP projects. The next twelve months, however, will be the time to prove that promised institutional changes accompany the written word. In our assessment, the GoG is likely to continue to move in the right direction and provide the training needed for prosecutors and judges, which will begin to bring about stiffer penalties and less frequent admission to bail of trafficking defendants. Formalization of the names of NGOs working with trafficking victims -- through the MOC -- will make access to detention facilities more regular and easier for those involved in identifying trafficking victims.

RIES